

From: [Maureen Davey](#)
To: [Henneman, Toni](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] 9-9-20 PUBLIC COMMENT Local Government Interim Committee Regional Fire Protection Authorities
Date: Wednesday, September 9, 2020 7:49:42 AM

PUBLIC COMMENT, Local Government Interim Committee, September 9, 2020

REGIONAL FIRE PROTECTION AUTHORITIES

Interim Committee members I am Maureen Davey Columbus Montana farmer/rancher in Stillwater County.

I **OPPOSE** legislation on **Regional Fire Protection Authorities** because this type of legislation will spell the end of volunteer fire departments in our counties, increase taxes and could possibly increase insurance.

Please vote **NO** to move **Regional Fire Protection Authorities** out of the Local Government Interim Committee.

Thank You.

Maureen Davey
51 LE Peterson Rd.
Columbus, Montana 59019

From: [John Esp](#)
To: [Henneman, Toni](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] FW: Regional Fire Protection Autho
Date: Wednesday, September 9, 2020 8:18:15 AM

Toni, I also received this email from the Donohe's. They had trouble with the online form rejecting their submission. Could you include it in public comment also. Thanks, John

Sent from [Mail \[go.microsoft.com\]](mailto:Mail[go.microsoft.com]) for Windows 10

On Sep 9, 2020, at 6:56 AM, Cathy Donohoe
<donohoecathy5@gmail.com> wrote:

On Tue, Sep 8, 2020 at 1:58 PM Cathy Donohoe
<donohoecathy5@gmail.com> wrote:

I am writing this email in reference to tomorrow's (Sept. 9, 2020) Local Government Interim Committee Meeting at 1:00 pm. regarding Regional Fire Protection Authorities..(PD3TH).

I reside at Nye Montana & have been a volunteer at the Nye Volunteer Fire Dept (NVFD) at Nye since 1975. At that time we built a one room fire dept all with donations & volunteer labor. In the last 45 years our NVFD & community have continued to grow. Our NVFD is a focal point of our community.

In speaking for myself, I feel that we as a community should still be able to make the decisions that we want to make with our NVFD & not be absorbed at the whim of another Fire Dept. If this bill is really as good as it is supposed to be, why were meetings not held at all local volunteer departments across the state? I just was informed about this draft today.

It looks like it is another opportunity for government to get bigger, & to keep telling those of us at a local level, how to run our lives...

When you write a bill that is 28 pages long, to be able to justify charging more, annexing what you want into your districts, basically taking over any of the fire departments that you chose too, it seems like a hidden agenda to me.

To make myself clear, I oppose Regional Fire Protection Authorities.

Please contact me via this email (donohoecathy5@gmail.com) that you received this email. Thanks for your time.

Paul Donohoe
190 Meyers Creek Road
Nye, MT 59061
406-328-6291

Henry J. Lischer, Jr.
Box 428
Nye, Montana 59061
September 8, 2020

Local Government Interim Committee
66th Montana Legislature
P.O. Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706

Sent to: Toni Henneman, Lead Staff, toni.henneman@mt.gov

Dear Members of the Local Government Interim Committee:

I write regarding the Regional Fire Protection Authorities bill (PD3TH) being considered by your Committee and which is on the Committee's agenda for September 9, 2020.

I am opposed to this Bill, as it would have an adverse effect on our local volunteer fire department in Nye, Montana. I believe that the Nye community has been very well served by our Nye Volunteer Fire Department (NVFD), and I believe that creation of a Regional Fire Protection Authority would be a mistake for the following reasons:

1. Responsiveness: It would reduce the autonomy, independence, and responsiveness of the NVFD.
2. Property taxes: The NVFD operates very efficiently, and the local property tax rates reflect that efficiency. I fear that a Regional Fire Protection Authority would cause our property taxes to rise.
3. Insurance costs: I also am concerned that a fire department consolidation might lead to higher property insurance costs for homeowners and renters in the Nye area.

In summary, I am opposed to this Bill, and I encourage your Committee not to cause this Bill to receive further legislative consideration.

Thank you for your public service and your consideration of this letter.



From: [Doxey Hatch](#)
To: [Henneman, Toni](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Fire Station
Date: Tuesday, September 8, 2020 5:13:10 PM

To Whom It May Concern:

We are writing to comment on the proposal to have the Columbus Fire Department take over the Fire Department in Nye.

While there may be advantages to adopting a hierarchical structure in the organization of Stillwater County fire fighting, we have a very concrete reason for opposing such a change: Our homeowners insurance requires that we be within five miles of a fire station. If we did not meet that requirement, we would have to pay hundreds of dollars more each year for our insurance. We are happy to have a fire station nearby along with competent volunteers to respond to fires. Please don't mess this up for us.

Meg and Doxey Hatch
20 Sky View Trail
Cathedral Mountain Ranch
P.O. Box 401
Nye, MT 59061

From: [Corey Arnold](#)
To: [Henneman, Toni](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Fwd: Public comment
Date: Tuesday, September 8, 2020 4:25:33 PM

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Corey Arnold <abartriangle1974@gmail.com>
Date: September 8, 2020 at 1:11:40 PM MDT
To: Dave Russell <dave@hrmmt.com>
Subject: **Public comment**

On behalf of myself and our fourth generation family ranch in Absarokee I'm opposed to this bill. By taking away the voice of the smaller rural fire departments they will close. These communities built them with not only donations of money but also their labor to build them as well as operate them. The volunteers will no longer volunteer under this new authority. I feel you will see the amount of personnel available to respond dwindle to zero.

Thanks for your time
Corey arnold

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Sandra Joys](#)
To: [Henneman, Toni](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] {EXTERNAL} For September 9 Meeting for Public Comment on Regional Fire Protection Authority
Date: Tuesday, September 8, 2020 2:40:56 PM

We are resident landowners in Nye. In a rural area like ours, we are fortunate to have the Nye Volunteer Fire Department. Whether fire, medical or other emergency, its volunteers are timely first responders. They are knowledgeable, experienced, dedicated and know well the land and how to access it. We strongly oppose a regional fire protection authority for Stillwater County as described in PD3TH.

David, Jon and Sandra Joys

From: [Barbara Lischer](#)
To: [Henneman, Toni](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Consolidated Fire Authority
Date: Tuesday, September 8, 2020 3:14:30 PM

Dear Committee Members,

I was greatly concerned to learn that a consolidated fire authority was being considered. Three weeks ago in the morning, I watched two Nye Fire Department vehicles head towards the Sibanye Stillwater Mine and Woodbine Falls Campground area to fight a fire started by lightning. In the afternoon, I again saw Nye Fire Department vehicles and volunteers head to Horseman Flats to put out another lightning-strike fire. Without their valuable, timely service in this part of the county, I predict those fires would have been much more destructive - possibly leading to the loss of more property and even lives. Please make **safety of the entire community a number one priority!!!**

Thank you,
Barbara Lischer
Nye, Montana

From: [Lee Wilder](#)
To: [Henneman, Toni](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Fire district
Date: Tuesday, September 8, 2020 12:07:48 PM

Consolidated fire authority in Stillwater County would significantly impact public safety in rural parts of the county. Just a few weeks ago, the Nye Fire Dept was able to hold a fire to 15 acres. With consolidated fire authority, this rancher would have lost many more acres
Sent from my iPhone

From: [Penny Keogh](#)
To: [Henneman, Toni](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Fwd: Meeting # 91703521439
Date: Tuesday, September 8, 2020 3:11:26 PM

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Penny Keogh <pennokeyo23@gmail.com>
Date: Tue, Sep 8, 2020, 2:29 PM
Subject: Meeting # 91703521439
To: <Toni.Henneman@mt.go>

I would like to respond in opposition to the proposal to reganolise fire district's in Stillwater County. I am a lifetime resident and landowner from Nye, and have been a member of the Nye Volunteer Fire Department for over 43 years. This proposal will redirect our local tax dollars out of our district for individuals personal gain.

I oppose this action!

Thanks Noel and Penny Keogh,
2257 Nye Rd,
Nye, MT 59061

From: [Frances Abbott](#)
To: [Henneman, Toni](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Nye Fire Department
Date: Tuesday, September 8, 2020 1:54:09 PM

This is Franny-she Abbott. We have place in Dean and have housed the Absorkee ambulance for years in our barn so that it could be quickly available for folks up the valley. We also have been donors to the fire department and sponsors to the 4 Wheeler that is auctioned each year. I feel that the Nye Fire Department is vitally important to our area. So many fires are popping up these days and this summer was full of accidents. they respond quickly and efficiently. PLEASE KEEP THE NYE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Franny-she Abbott

sorry that I cannot make the meeting!!!

From: [Deborah Griffin](#)
To: [Henneman, Toni](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Nye Fire District
Date: Tuesday, September 8, 2020 2:35:03 PM

Toni,

I am writing to express my concern about the new plan to relocate our fire district to Columbus. As you know, Nye is such a remote area and that isolation puts us miles away from the kind of sudden response we need when storms come out of the mountains and we have lightning strikes.

This is my 18th summer in the area and I have been through numerous fire season where many acres of timber was burned. It is the sudden response by our local volunteer fire department that keeps us from losing even more land when this occurs.

Just this summer we had two strikes and the one on the Keogh ranch was contained entirely by the local Nye Fire Department, cutting the loss to just a minimum.

This would be a terrible cut for us and I beg all of you to please consider protecting our ranchers and homeowners in the rural part of the state. We are taxpayers and ask that we be funded to support our volunteer fire departments.

Thank you,
Deborah Griffin
PO Box 480
Nye, MT 59061

--

"Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless is to side with the powerful, not be neutral."

Paulo Freire

From: lsangmeister@nemont.net
To: [Henneman, Toni](#)
Cc: ["Charles & Lana Sangmeister"](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Nye, MT local fire department
Date: Tuesday, September 8, 2020 1:58:25 PM

Dear Local Government Interim Committee,

I live in Nye, MT and write you concerning our local Volunteer Fire Department. We understand that part of your agenda today will include discussions about Regional Fire Protection Authorities. I further understand that part of these discussions is about consolidating authority and funding, which for us would pull resources away from Nye. Nye sits near the dead end of MT highway 419. Beyond us is the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness. About 1 mile before the road ends, is Stillwater -Sibanye Mine, the biggest employer in the County and one of the biggest in the state.

I've lived in Nye, fulltime, for 18 years. During that time, we've had numerous forest fires with the biggest being the Derby fire. It burned for more than 6 weeks, scorched more than 250,000 acres, killed livestock and wildlife and destroyed 22 homes! One of the lessons from that fire, is that if our local department would have had the authority and been able to jump on it when it was first sighted, it could have been out the first day!

Less than 3 weeks ago we had 2 lightning started fires in 1 day. Because resources were able to jump on these fires right away, they were both out the same day. I mention this because our local department is key to our safety, our homes, our livestock, our way of life. Columbus, MT is over an hour's drive from Nye and frankly, their issues are not our issues. Pulling funding from here could be disastrous! With fires, time and ability is key. For ability, you need resources and funding begets resources. Please do not do anything that would hamper our local force in supporting us to the best of their ability. They are trained, experienced, willing and because we've had funding, capable in everyway to respond to our community's needs as well as the mine's, and all those who recreate in this beautiful area.

Thank you!

Lana Sangmeister
35A Stanley Coulee Way
Nye

From: frannyhe@aol.com
To: [Henneman, Toni](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] REGIONAL FIRE PROTECTION AUTHORITY
Date: Tuesday, September 8, 2020 2:06:05 PM

Dear Toni:

Please pass this along to the powers to be as it is very important that the rural fire companies continue to exist.

We live in Dean MT which is approximately half way between Absarokee and Nye Fire Districts. It is about a 20 minute drive from Absarokee and 20 minutes from Nye. By basing the fire response in Columbus you are adding another at least another 30 minutes of response time to our property and one an hour to respond to an event in Nye. That is totally unacceptable to the residence in those communities.

The residence in these rural communities depend on the local fire response and also help with donations and many volunteers, who work very hard to protect their neighbors. There are more and more people moving into the areas and they need the security of a quick response for protection.

Please implore your Committee member to keep the rural Fire Departments in existence, it will make a difference to all of us.

Sincerely,

Francis H. Abbott, Jr.

From: [Joan Brownell](#)
To: [Henneman, Toni](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Regional Fire Protection Authority
Date: Tuesday, September 8, 2020 1:02:42 PM

To whom it may concern

We live in southern Stillwater County and have supported the Nye Fire Department for many years. In fact, recently the Nye Fire Department extinguished a house fire in our neighborhood.

Although I am not well versed on the reasons for this authority, it appears it would remove much of the powers and functions of our local Nye Fire Department to another entity. I do not at this time see any concrete reasoning to do this as the Nye Fire Department is an integral element of our region and has successfully served the community for years.

Thank you.



September 8, 2020

State Senator Margaret MacDonald
Local Government Interim Committee
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59601

RE: PD 0003 Regional Fire Authority

Dear Madame Chair and Members of the Local Government Interim Committee,

As a major timberland owner in NW Montana, Stimson Lumber Company greatly appreciates the fire protection it receives from local fire districts every year. We feel that the current fire preparedness assessment for this protection is fair and reasonable. The regional fire authority concept, in our opinion, will create an inequitable additional tax burden on timberland owners to which we must object. The committee's solution to our concerns by inserting detraction language in section 14 and classified forest land fee exemption language in section 17 of the draft legislation was an acceptable compromise to our concerns. However, we are disappointed with the committee's decision to now strike the language in section 17, which puts us back in a position to oppose the legislation if it remains in its current form. We respectfully ask that the section 17 language that was in the draft presented to the July local government meeting be re-inserted.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to comment. We look forward to a fair and equitable resolution to this issue.

Respectfully,

Bruce Rowland

Area Woodlands Manager-Montana
Stimson Lumber Company
60 Port Blvd, STE 101
Libby, Montana 59923
browland@stimsonlumber.com